DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 201 063 EA 013 518

AUTHOR Peterson, Kent D.
TITLE The Principal as Resource Allocator.
PUB DATE 9 Apr 80
NOTE 23p.: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Boston, MA, April 7-11, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Role; Elementary Education; Political Influences; Power Structure; *Principals; *Resource Allocation
IDENTIFIERS Political Economics

ABSTRACT

The effect of political influences on the allocation of personnel, money, facilities, and equipment by elementary school principals is discussed in this paper. The use of Zald's political economy framework as a tool for understanding the principal's role in allocating resources is described by the author. He suggests that the principal occupies a pivotal position (between the school and central office) through which resources flow. The author comments on the constraints and channels that are influenced or created by the political structure of the district. Finally, the way in which research might affect resource allocation is discussed by using the political economy framework as a conceptual tool. (Author/JEH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED201063

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

The Principal as Resource Allocator

Kent D. Peterson
The University of Chicago

Paper prepared for presentation in a symposium, "The Political Economy of American Schools: The Distribution of Goods and Services in a Multilevel Organization," Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Boston, Massachusetts, April 9,1980.

EA 013 518

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
K. D. Peterson
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Principals have many different types of resources which they must allocate. These may include personnel, money, facilities and equipment, and their own time. The ways these resources are distributed, in what quantities and to whom, may influence educational outcomes at the same time they affect certain political features of the district. Researchers interested in the organizational characteristics of school districts have not had an adequate way of analyzing the complex forces which constrain these allocation decisions of principals nor has there been a way of analyzing the influence of these allocation decisions on the district as a whole, The political economy framework is such an approach. It allows us to decompose many of the forces which act on and are influenced by resource allocation decisions of elementary school principals.

The world of the elementary school principal is poorly understood. Prescriptive essays, theoretical analyses, and a meagre empirical literature have not effectively explained and described the tasks, decisions, and constraints on principals. Members of the sociotechnical school suggest that the allocation of resources is directly related to the nature of the technology and tasks. Decision theorists argue for the analysis of individual decisions as though these were divorced from technical uncertainty and interunit politics. Environmental determinists argue that decisions about the use of resources are due largely to contingencies and variation in demands from the environment. Some political theorists suggest that resource allocation decisions are best understood as the result of political bargaining between factions in the organization. These theorists focus on the processes and explanatory variables of their particular disciplines or models, excluding the influences of other factors. The political economy approach attempts to meld these various models into a single, more comprehensive analytic framework.

Developed by Zald(1970) during a study of change and adaptation in a metropolitan YMCA, the political economy framework we will use here can help

guide our understanding of how principals' decisions about resource allocation influence and are constrained by features of elementary school districts. As a conceptual framework, rather than a theoretical formulation, it does not provide us with testable hypotheses about organizations, rather it orients and guides our attention to certain important and interacting aspects of organizations. It is thus particularly useful as a framework for guiding an analysis of resource allocation decisions by elementary school principals.

The Political Economy Framework.

Organizations contain two major internal systems: the political system and the economic system. The political system, or the "polity", is the control and influence aspect of the organization. The economic system is the technical production and exchange part of the organization in which tangible and intangible goods and services are produced and exchanged. (See Zald, 1970)

The political system of organizations is comprised of four central elements: (1)the distribution of power, (2)the major value constellations, (3)the nature of demand aggregation, and (4)the succession system. These elements interact to produce the particular system of control and influence found in an organization. The structure and process of control and influence interact with and at times may be analytically indistinguishable from aspects of the organization's economy.

The organizational economy, the internal production and exchange system, is comprised of four major elements: (1)the allocation rules, (2)the accounting and information system, (3)the incentive system, and (4)task and technology related unit differentiation. These elements comprise the set of structures and processes which are the production and exchange system of the organization.

The interaction of the political and economic systems of organizations is extensive. Characteristics of the economy influence and constrain the polity, just as the polity influences and constrains the economy. We can better

understand the workings of subsets of activities within organizations when we know what the characteristics of these systems are like and how they interact.

In elementary school districts principals have broad discretion to allocate certain types of resources. For example, the principal may put the fifth grades in the east wing and the third grades in the west wing, have kindergarten recess at 10:45, or give the gifted program an additional $50 to buy new reading materials. The ways these and other resources are allocated may influence, in minor or in major ways, particular structures or processes of the political economy of the district. By knowing which resources are allocated, in what quantities, and to whom, we will be better equipped to understand the influences of these resource distributions.

The Principal as Resource Allocator: Influences on the District Political Economy.

Using a set of interviews with suburban elementary school principals and knowledge about school districts, we will describe some of the ways the resource allocation decisions of principals may influence various features of the internal political economy of the district. Clearly, it is not possible to describe the potential influences of all types of resource allocations on all features of the political economy system. Instead, we will try to provide examples which were either frequently mentioned in the interviews or seem particularly illustrative of a pattern of influence. We shall discuss specifically the allocation of personnel, money, facilities and equipment, and the principal's time.

Personnel.

People are not only the most costly but also the primary resource used in the production of education. The placement and use of teachers and other personnel may influence a number of different features of the political economy system.

First, changing the "stock" of teachers at a given grade level may increase the degree of individualization, grouping, or instructional pace. The same may occur by adding an instructional aide. The allocation of more or fewer personnel to particular classrooms or grade levels can alter the technical efficiency of a unit, thus directly affecting the production system.

Second, shifting teachers or adding personnel may also affect the level of community-school conflict. A principal may shift a teacher so that children of vocal or hostile community members are in classes with the "best" teachers, thus avoiding potential conflict or dissatisfaction.

Third, shifting teachers may be used to lessen intra-faculty conflict. As central office administrators often view low faculty conflict or high staff morale as a mark of a well-run school, lower conflict may bring the principal promotion, salary increases, or greater district status, thus changing power and status distributions among principals.

In brief, the placement and use of personnel may influence the technical aspect of the school, the school level distribution of power, internal conflict, and the aggregation of community demands. The allocation of teachers thus, may be used to change the internal productive dynamics of classrooms, to curb internal dissension or intragroup conflict, to coopt hostile parents, and, finally to improve the quality of education for particular children by placing them with a teacher skilled to deal with their needs. Thus, the decision to allocate personnel may derive from productive and technical considerations, political exigencies, or a combination of these. These decisions may have an impact on different aspects of the district political economy system.

Money.

Money for instructional materials and supplies is sometimes a small but important resource which principals may allocate in their schools. The

way money is allocated, how much and to whom, may influence school and district level political as well as economic systems.

Principals may maintain absolute control over instructional funds or they may grant decision-making to teachers as individuals or as groups. It has been suggested previously that representative decision-making may be one way to generate needed faculty consensus or to coopt faculty groups.(Bidwell, 1965) This may increase the power of the principal in the school.

In the case where principals maintain control over the use of funds, and provide differential distribution of money, directing the use of these funds can influence the innovation of new programs, or the expansion and enhancement of existing programs, thus acting directly on the technological structure of the school and possibly increasing the visibility and prestige of the school. This is one way a sub-unit may buffer itself from central administrators. (Thompson, 1967)

By increasing the marginal productivity of particular classrooms through the differential allocation of money, principals may be improving the educational effectiveness of their schools. But this type of allocation decision may bring on conflict from teachers or parents who see this approach as inequitable. In this situation we see clearly the potentially conflicting demands of various features of the polity and the economy.

Facilities and Equipment.

Facilities and equipment are two important resources which may be allocated by the principal. Facilities include rooms, hallways, storage areas, and outdoor spaces. Equipment refers to non-human materials or tools used in the technical process but which are not controlled by individual teachers. Teaching machines, portable blackboards, taperecorders, and libraries are types of equipment which a principal may control and allocate.

The allocation rules for these resources may vary. The rules may be "first-come-first-serve", approval by the grade chairperson, demonstrated need, or with the permission of a specialist. Different rules may engender different relationships among teachers, with the principal, and with central office; for example, if these facilities or equipment are allocated to subject areas or to activities which are of special concern to the superintendent, the school may increase its prestige and power in relation to other schools. Also, by granting certain grade levels the right to control a stock of equipment, such as movie projectors or taperecorders, these groups may increase their support of the principal. The allocation of prized equipment may be seen both as a political and an economic event in schools.

Generally, principals maintain control over the use of facilities. The distribution of classroom assignments may be for the purpose of rewarding or sanctioning certain teachers, providing better space for a particular type of class, or for assuaging a particular community faction. Allocation decisions may impact upon instructional effectiveness, internal power distribution, or external political demands thus influencing the balance of power and the rate of productivity in the district as a whole.

The decisions made by principals to allocate facilities and equipment can influence either the political or the economic systems of the district; they may also influence both systems at once.

The Principal's Time.

One resource that is discussed infrequently is the principal's time. With the salary level of today's principal, it is conceivable that more money is spent in some schools on this salary than on instructional materials. This is an expensive and potentially valuable resource. The way a principal

uses his time may strongly influence both the education of students and the politics of the district. In this section we will look at some of the major tasks which take up a principal's time and suggest how the allocation of this resource may influence the political economy of the district.

The time a principal uses on various tasks may vary in amount and distribution.(Peterson, 1978) A principal may work directly with students, teachers, parents, central office administrators, or work on district matters such as curriculum policy or transportation.

Principals may spend time working with students in a variety of ways: as disciplinarian, as substitute teacher, as counselor. A principal who spends time working with students directly may, depending on the activity, be increasing his status among teachers or among parents, or simply keeping the school running smoothly by buffering teachers from unruly pupils.

When a principal works with teachers, both the amount of time spent and the purpose of the interaction are important in predicting the influence of this resource allocation. A principal who helps improve an ineffective teacher or supports good teachers may increase the learning of students in the school thus having an impact on the productivity of the district. A principal who improves a particularly poor teacher or group of teachers may significantly increase his political support from the community and his visibility in the system, thus affecting political structures in the district.

By allocating time to work with parents, the principal may influence the district's political economy system in a number of ways. Let us assume that this allocation of time helps improve the community's knowledge of, interest in, and support of the school. This in turn could decrease school-community conflict, enhance the career chances of the principal, and bring in

parent volunteers to aid teachers. These changes, if they are significant, could produce a shift in the power of the principal at the district level and at the same time improve instruction through increased teacher motivation and adult volunteer help. The allocation of time to this contingency may produce strong changes in both the polity and the economy.

The minimum amount of time devoted to district meetings and paperwork may be dictated by central office requirements. By allocating more time to district matters a principal may increase his visibility with those who make promotion and sponsorship decisions and may increase his power in relation to other principals, thus changing the political balance at the managerial level. This allocation, though, may decrease the amount of time devoted to working with the technical core.

Finally, principals may allocate their time to matters of a technical nature, such as learning about new curriculum developments, designing programs for the gifted, or working with teachers on individualizing instruction, to name but a few such activities. Allocating time in this manner may influence the balance of expert power in the school, particularly if the principal replaces a senior teacher as the "expert" in some arena. This allocation of time may also influence the task and technology of the schools, for the principal may change modes of instruction, the teaming of teachers, or the use of certain instructional materials or equipment.

The time of principals is a resource which may affect a number of different features of the political economy of the district. As these illustrative examples show, resource allocations may have an impact on both the political and the economic systems of school districts.

District Constraints on the Resource Allocation Decisions of Principals.

As we have seen, the ways principals allocate the resources at their disposal may influence the structure and processes of the political economy system of the entire district. Conversely, the political economy of the school district may provide differential constraints on the allocation of resources by principals. Bidwell and Friedkin(1980) have earlier discussed some of the predictors of distributive outcomes in school districts. In addition, the district may limit the type or amount of the resource, set rules for allocation, provide rewards or sanctions for allocating in certain ways, or set up structures for monitoring allocation decisions, to name a few such constraining features.

Both the political system and the economic system of the school district constrain resource allocation decisions by principals. In this section we will look at illustrative examples of district constraints on these allocation decisions. We will begin with constraints caused by the political system and then move later to constraints from the economic system.

The Internal Political System.

1. Constraints caused by the distribution of power.

Power in an organization can affect, in important ways, the allocation of resources to and within subunits. In particular, we will look at how the amount of power in the district, its location, and its source may constrain resource allocation decisions by principals.

The amount of power in an organization refers to the amount of energy or resources either individuals or groups mobilize to influence others.(Zald, 1970) The amount of power in a district may influence the allocation of resources by providing principals either with (a)coalitions who support their allocation decisions, or (b)coalitions who contest the way the principal allocates resources.

On the one hand, in a district with low power and centralized decision-making, the principal may have no way to oppose restrictions on resource distribution. On the other hand in districts with a high level of influence attempts, there may be a political climate in which principals can use influence to press for their right to allocate resources.

The location of power in a school district may also constrain the resource allocation decisions of principals. Power may be located with different groups, different individuals, or different schools. The major power centers may be parents and the community, the board of education, central office and the superintendent, the principals, or the teachers. Power may be distributed evenly or unevenly among these people. The more that power is located outside the principalship, the more chance there is for resource allocations at the school level to be constrained. If power is centralized, allocation of resources may be restricted by the structure of the budget and other district policies.

The source or base of power may also affect resource allocation decisions. French and Raven(1957) delineate five bases of social power: legitimate, expert, referent, reward, and coercive. If there is a predominant type of power used in the district, this may affect how principals attempt to gain control over resource allocations. Forinstance, if the district is highly bureaucratized and legitimate or position power is most frequently used, there may be little a principal can do to object to the resources he receives except by going to a higher authority, which is difficult. In a district where expert power is most common, a principal may gain resources by using arguments of expertise. The type of power invoked by central office or the district in the allocation of resources and the making of decisions may differentially constrain the allocation of resources by principals.

2. Constraints caused by the nature of demand aggregation.

The development of aggregated demands and the existence of conflict handling mechanisms may indirectly influence the ways principals allocate resources. The degree to which demands are intensified through coalition formation may affect the willingness of principals to allocate resources in ways which may produce conflict with powerful groups. In contrast, the existence of conflict handling mechanisms may aid principals in allocating resources in more risky ways, for they know that there is a formal mechanism to deal with groups who object to the decision. In organizations with assertive clientele, managers may avoid allocating resources which may produce complaints from political coalitions of clientele. For example, using funds to teach sex education in one type of community may spell disaster, while not teaching sex education could produce problems in a different sort of community, depending on the aggregation of clientele interests around this issue.

3. Constraints caused by the major value constellations.

Values are generalized principles of behavior which provide standards by which goals and acts may be judged. Values may be transformed into norms, which are expectations of behavior in a given situation. The values and norms held by those in power may influence decisions principals make about allocating resources.

Conflicting value constellations may and often do exist in school districts. Teachers may hold the values of "professional autonomy" while principals hold the value of "accountability". When values are in conflict, resource allocation may be problematic for the principal. In addition, central office values may limit the amount or range of resources a principal may have to allocate in the

school. Values,thus, may affect how principals distribute resources.

The Internal Economic System.

The economy of an organization consists of the central components for producing goods and services. Four core features of the economy, allocation rules, the accounting and information system, the incentive system, and the nature of task and technology related unit differentiation, may constrain in major ways the allocation of resources at the school level. Let us look at some of the ways the features of the internal economy may constrain the resource allocation practices of principals.

1. Constraints caused by the accounting and information system.

The accounting and information system of school districts is used to gather a "reading of the current state" of the district. This information may be used to allocate incentives to effective or loyal principals or to monitor the work and outputs of the district so that curricular or personnel changes can be made to improve outcomes.

The accounting and information system can act in other ways as a constraint on the allocation of resources. The focus of the upper level accounting system, either money or output accounting, signals to principals the tasks and activities which are important to those in power. If central office administrators gather information about reading scores, principals can reasonably interpret this to mean that reading is important and thus they should allocate more resources to this area. Similarly, if superintendents are particularly quick in responding to parent complaints about a school, this tells principals that these are central contingencies to which they must attend. Thus, the accounting and information system in school districts may be seen as an important signalling mechanism, spotlighting those organizational activities which are

important to the dominant coalition. Principals may decide to allocate resources in those areas on which accounting and information systems focus.

2. Constraints caused by the incentive system.

As with the accounting and information system, the incentive system may act as a form of signalling mechanism. Rewards and sanctions signal the activities, tasks, and outputs which are important to organizational power centers. Given information about valued activities, individual principals may make allocation decisions to increase the rewards they receive. These may be career mobility, salary increases, or better school assignments. Incentives thus, may channel allocation decisions.

3. Constraints caused by the succession system.

The succession system of school districts may constrain the resource allocation decisions of principals, if the principal is interested in making career changes and if resource allocation decisions are tied to career mobility. In this case, a principal may make allocation decisions to increase his status in the district. If the principal is not interested in moving, allocation decisions will be made on other bases.

4. Constraints caused by task and technology related unit differentiation.

Research and theory has shown that task and technological contingencies are important in explaining the structure and dynamics of organizations.(Thompson, 1967) The tasks of specific positions and the technology of the educational organization may produce constraints on the allocation practices of principals.

The nature of the technology and structure may affect the distribution of resources in schools. Schools are relatively autonomous units containing the same constituent elements: students, teachers, classrooms, and a principal. Each school needs some of the same basic resources: eg. books, instructional materials,

chalk, manilla paper, and blackboard erasers. District administrators may distribute resources on the basis of student enrolment, number of classrooms, or number of teachers, rather than on the basis of different technical requirements. But if the principal is able to demonstrate that his school has special technical needs or activities, the school may be granted more resources or broader discretionary power in allocating the resources.

In areas of work where tasks are routinized, distribution of resources may follow prescribed rules and procedures. All pupils may receive one reading book, one workbook, and one math book. In this case there may be little question about how much or what type of resource is needed. These decisions may be controlled closely by upper level administrators.

In areas where tasks are not routine, such as curricular programs for the gifted, allocation of resources may be constrained by the norms of the district, community pressures, or demands from specialist teacher coalitions. In the absence of political factions, the allocation of resources to non-routine tasks may be less constrained.

The particular structure of school districts may be important to resource allocation decisions. The geographic dispersion of schools may allow principals more leeway in the decisions they make allocating resources. Schools are usually physically separated from upper level administrative purview, thus making supervision and monitoring of activities and decisions difficult. Thus, a district covering a wide geographic area may offer fewer constraints than one covering a smaller area.

Specialization of central office administrators may affect resource allocations. In cases where there are central office specialists in subject areas, principals may be constrained by the decisions of these specialists. With no central office specialists, principals may have more leeway in allocating resources to instructional approaches they personally support.

In brief, the nature of educational technology, the specialization of teachers and administrators, andthe geographic dispersion of schools may all differentially constrain resource allocation decisions by principals.

5. Constraints caused by allocation rules.

All organizations have both formal and informal rules guiding the allocation of resources. Formal rules are found in the detailed, written commitments to certain distributional patterns. One thinks of financial budgets in industry which specify how funds are to be divided among production, advertising, research, and purchasing departments. Informal rules may be found in the unwritten norms and rules-of-thumb used by managers and executives to make allocation decisions.

For principals, four types of resources may be constrained by allocation rules. These resources include personnel, money, facilities and equipment, and the principal's time. Allocation rules are the most powerful and direct constraint on the decisions principals make about resource allocation. Constraints on each type of resource will be discussed in detail, for this is the most constraining of all the aspects of the school district political economy.

Personnel. As mentioned previously, personnel in school districts comprise the largest district expense as well as the central productive component. Rules which specify the recruitment, hiring, transfer, and use of personnel set limits on the ways principals may differentially allocate this resource.

If principals are restricted in the type of recruiting they may do, forinstance not being allowed to "headhunt" in neighboring districts, the stock of this resource may be constrained by the effectiveness of central office procedures for recruiting qualified teachers. Likewise, a small number of applicants will restrict the range of choices available to principals.

Hiring and salary practices may also limit the quantity and quality of this resource. Poor search and recruitment procedures combined with low salaries will attract few qualified teachers.

Declining enrolments and school closings in an increasing number of suburban districts have made internal transfer policies more and more important to the allocation decisions of principals. Rules for transferring tenured teachers among district schools directly constrains the allocation of personnel. In districts with random assignment, especially large urban districts, principals may have little say over the personnel they receive. In other districts, one might find teacher distribution decided by informal bargaining or the "wooing" of the better teachers by socially skilled principals. Thus, the nature of transfer policies may have a strong influence on the allocation of teachers within districts.

Other central office policies may also constrain the use of personnel. Both administrative rules and teacher contracts may define the extent to which principals can choose how to use the teachers they have. In some districts where rules and role definitions are flexible, classroom teachers may take on different sized groups of pupils outside of regular classrooms or take on teacher support responsibilities. In some districts redeployment of teachers may be relatively easy due to the lack of written policy, while in other districts teacher responsibilities are tightly prescribed and carefully monitored.

Finally, rules and norms of the district may set limits on the use and the number of parent volunteers a principal may use. Volunteers in schools may significantly change the student-adult ratio and be of assistance to teachers. If district policy, norms, or history prohibit the use of parents and other community members who offer their services, principals may be limited in the stock of this resource which is at their disposal.

Money. In many organizations money is one of the central resources that a manager can allocate. In schools and school districts money for supplies is a small proportion of the total budget. Nonetheless, the allocation of money is important and directly constrained by allocation rules.

First, the amount of money available to principals for supplies and materials is limited to the amount granted by central office and the board of education. Second, the structure of the budget and informal district norms further constrain the allocation of money to various areas. The budget may take on many forms. It may be divided into categories within which the principal can spend a given amount. It may be a lump sum. It may also be indeterminate, based on what the principal can prove is needed for the school. The restrictiveness of categories and the rules for inter-category "borrowing" limits the flexibility a principal has in allocating money for different materials, for different age groups, or for different subject areas. The rigidity of the categories limits the budgetary discretion range of the principal. This discretionary range may be broad or narrow; forinstance, a principal may be given a lump sum to spend on fifth grade materials or this sum may be divided into specific amounts for each subject area. Finally, unwritten norms may define, like the actual budget, how funds should be allocated. Thus, both budget and norms differentially constrain resource allocation decisions.

Facilities and Equipment. The type and use of facilities and equipment may be constrained by district allocation rules. The facilities available to principals are directly constrained by earlier decisions on school architecture, number of classrooms, and playground design. Some changes may be possible, such as increasing the size of the library, adding dividers in an open space school, or breaking through a wall to make an assembly room, but these are not commonly done.

More important than the type of facilities available, since they are difficult to change, is the discretion a principal has in the use of the facilities. Forinstance, can the principal use the hallways for student activities; can a portion of the library be used as a science lab; can the principal decide what teachers can use which rooms? District policy may dictate how facilities may be allocated to different usages.

The allocation of equipment, once it is in the school may not be constrained by central office allocation rules. Equipment in schools is often allocated according to the wishes of the principal and faculty, unless perhaps the equipment falls in the bailiwick of an assertive central office specialist.

The Principal's Time. As we have said, the principal's time is one of the most costly resources at the principal's disposal. The demands made on the principal's time by central office will therefore affect the allocation of this resource.

The amount of time available to a principal is a function of several factors relating to central office policy and district norms. First, how many district meetings the principal is required to attend influences the stock of this resource. Second, special administrative duties may decrease the amount of time which can be used in the school. Third, extracurricular activities may require the principal's attendance. Fourth, the amount of required paper work can seriously cut into the stock of hours available to work on school level problems. All these factors constrain the stock of administrative time which a principal has available to allocate to school level tasks.

Norms and expectations, informal rules about how a principal ought to use his time, that is , how he ought to allocate it to different tasks may also act as constraints. How much time principals should spend "inservicing" teachers, how much time

fostering good community relations, how much time spent planning curriculum or budgets, may exist as norms of behavior. These norms may constrain the allocation of the principal's time.

As we can see the nature and features of the political and economic systems of school districts in many ways constrain the allocation decisions of principals. Obviously, describing all of these influences is difficult. Nonetheless, these observations may help guide our attentions to salient features of the political and economic systems of school districts which constrain the distribution and use of resources.

This approach to the analysis and study of school districts has many implications for practice. First, by understanding the political economy framework administrators may gain a broader insight into the complex interaction of various features of the school district. Second, by using this framework to guide resource allocation decisions, schoolmen can better determine the intended consequences of their decisions. Finally, knowledge of this framework could help administrators implement innovation or change better by knowing about various political and economic contingencies.

Research is needed to examine the relationships between the political economy of school districts and the resource allocation decisions of principals. This research should be careful, systematic, and theoretically guided; searching for those areas of the framework which will help the most in understanding the processes and structures of these organizations. For this purpose, concrete data gathered in direct observations of administrators would be useful. The use of informants to gather data on the ways the political economy of a district interacts with resource allocation decisions would also be helpful. In addition, comparative case studies and single district histories could illuminate the

ways different districts approach the problems of resource allocation.

The political economy framework is a complex and new approach to the analysis of educational organizations. Nonetheless, it provides us with one of the better ways of viewing resource allocation decisions by principals. The complexities of school districts need an equally complex analytic tool. The political economy framework may be that tool.

Bibliography

Bidwell, Charles E. "The School as a Formal Organization," in James March,(Ed.) Handbook of Organizations. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1965.

Bidwell, Charles E. and Noah E. Friedkin. "The Political Economy of Resource Allocation in School Districts."(Paper prepared for presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Education Research Association, Boston, Massachusetts, 1980.)

French, John and Bertram Raven. "The Bases of Social Power," in Dorwin Cartwright (Ed.) Studies in Social Power. Ann Arbor, Michigan:Institute for Social Research, 1959.

Peterson, Kent D. "The Principal's Tasks," The Administrators' Notebook, v.26,n.8, 1978.

Thompson, James D. Organizations in Action. New York: McGraw Hill Book Co.,1967.

Zald, Mayer. The Political Economy of the YMCA. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.

Zald, Mayer. "Political Economy: A Framework for Comparative Analysis," in Mayer Zald(Ed.) Power in Organizations. Nashville, Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press, 1970.